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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3711

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 000127

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FOR NEA AND IO/PHO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/28/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [MO](#) [WI](#)  
SUBJECT: DAS SANDERSON MEETS SENIOR MOROCCAN INTELLIGENCE  
AND MFA OFFICIALS

REF: A. RABAT 114  
[1](#)B. RABAT 34

Classified By: Political Counselor Gregory Thome, Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: DAS Janet Sanderson held separate meetings in Rabat January 21 with Director-General for Studies and Documentation (DGED) Mansouri and MFA Chief of Staff Bourita. Mansouri indicated that Morocco intends to remain deeply involved in assisting Guinea's transition. On counterterrorism, he highlighted Moroccan fears regarding possible AQIM attacks in sub-Saharan Africa, and alleged links between AQIM and the Polisario (but did not elaborate). Both interlocutors welcomed UNSG Personal Envoy Ross's invitation to resume informal Western Sahara talks Feb. 9-11 and said Morocco would participate; however, they held out little hope for progress if the Personal Envoy (and the U.S.) failed to convince Algeria to participate officially and to play a less obstructive role. At the MFA, Bourita further argued that Ross's mandate is two fold: to reinvigorate the talks, but also to find ways to improve relations between Morocco and Algeria. He also unleashed a spirited case against enlarging MINURSO's mandate to include human rights, when it comes up for renewal in April. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Deputy Assistant Secretary Janet Sanderson visited Morocco January 20-23. In addition to meeting Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri (Reftel A), she met separately in Rabat with DGED (Morocco's Director of National Intelligence and National Security Advisor equivalent) Mohammed Yassine Mansouri and with Ambassador Nasser Bourita, MFA Director-General for Multilateral Cooperation and Chief of Staff to the Foreign Minister.

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Model Cooperation on Guinea  
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[1](#)3. (C) In each meeting, Bourita and Mansouri highlighted the French-U.S.-Moroccan cooperation in response to the Guinea crisis (Reftel B), saying that our shared efforts to convince junta leader Moussa Dadis Camara not to return to Conakry should serve as a "model" for dealing trilaterally with future crises in Africa. Guinea remains fragile, "and King Mohammed VI has asked me -- not as national intelligence director, but personally -- to remain involved in the transition," Mansouri said. For that transition to succeed, Camara cannot go back to Conakry, but he also cannot come back to Rabat, he added. Sanderson responded by commending Morocco's efforts, and thanked the GOM for "creating the space"

for the U.S. to work with its partners to resolve the crisis.

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The Terror Threat in Africa  
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¶4. (C) On counterterrorism, Mansouri highlighted Moroccan fears regarding possible AQIM attacks in sub-Saharan Africa. He emphasized that, in combating the AQIM threat, the Magreb cannot be disassociated from Africa, and that Morocco sees the potential for AQIM attacks in Nigeria, Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire. AQIM has begun to develop two separate cells in southern Algeria -- one of which, Mansouri alleged, may have links to the Polisario -- but he offered no further detail. In responses to Sanderson's question, Mansouri admitted that Moroccan/Algerian counterterrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing is non-existent. He described various unofficial triangulation schemes, whereby information is shared through third parties, but admitted that over the course of the past year direct communication has ceased.

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Algeria Undermining Sahara Negotiations  
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¶5. (C) Highlighting a theme Sanderson heard throughout her visit, Mansouri welcomed UNSG Personal Envoy Christopher Ross's invitation to resume informal Western Sahara talks Feb. 9-11 and said Morocco would participate. However, he expressed frustration with

Algeria's apparent refusal to participate officially in informal discussions, stating that the GOM needs Algeria to become "an interlocutor of good faith." Mansouri also laid a small portion of the blame for Algerian intransigence at the feet of the U.S., saying that Algiers has misinterpreted the Obama administration's less outspoken support for Morocco's autonomy play as "a change in position on the issue," and is using this as an excuse not to participate. From a security perspective, the DG also alleged that Morocco has evidence that small numbers of "individuals with narcotics and terrorist connections" are moving from the Tindouf camps into Moroccan-controlled Sahara at Algeria's behest, potentially to create unrest. At the last round of informals in Austria, Mansouri recounted, Minister Delegate and Algerian Western Sahara negotiator Abdelkader Messahel even stated to Ross, "We are capable of creating unrest in the Western Sahara."

¶6. (C) Sanderson responded that the USG shared some of Morocco's concerns about the Algerians' reluctance to play a formal role in the negotiations and said she would urge them to play an active role at the meeting. However, she noted that the USG wants the talks to move away from formalities and toward substance -- something all sides needed to work to achieve. She reassured Mansouri that the USG's position regarding Morocco's autonomy plan as one viable option for resolving the dispute has not changed.

¶7. (C) At the MFA, Bourita echoed many of the same themes as Mansouri regarding Morocco's willingness to participate in the next round of informal talks. That said, he acknowledged the poor relations between Morocco and Algeria, and noted that the UNSC had given Personal Envoy Ross two missions: to get the GOM-Polisario talks back on track, and to seek ways to improve Moroccan-Algerian relations. "We are doing OK on the first, but failing on the second," he admitted. On a positive note, Bourita added that there has been no better hope in recent years for progress in resolving the Sahara crisis, given that both Morocco and Algeria are in a position to negotiate from a position of strength; that there is international political consensus in favor of a

negotiated solution; and that "we have the best mediator since (former UNSG Personal Envoy James) Baker."

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GOM Strongly Opposes Human Rights Mandate for MINURSO  
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18. (C) Bourita also gave a spirited defense of Morocco's longstanding opposition to adding a human rights component to the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara's (MINURSO) mandate, which comes up for its annual renewal in April. First, he argued, MINURSO's implementation of such a mandate would be easy on the Morocco side, because Morocco has willingly become party to all the relevant UN human rights conventions; however, the Polisario -- to whom Algeria has "abdicated its sovereignty" -- is party to none of them, and would never agree to permit MINURSO to carry out its human rights role. Second, a human right mandate would introduce a political component into a ceasefire agreement that is purely technical -- potentially creating "unnecessary tension between Morocco and MINURSO." Third, Bourita said, Algeria and the Polisario would politicize any MINURSO human rights activities and distort them as a means to "give separatists more freedom to operate." Finally, adding the human rights mandate would be simply unnecessary, given that Morocco has already opened its doors to UN and European Union human rights monitors, international NGOs and U.S. diplomats who freely travel to and examine the human rights issues in the territory.

19. (C) Sanderson emphasized that the USG has made no decisions yet regarding how it will react in New York in April to the question of enlarging MINURSO's mandate; however, she cautioned, some UNSC members intended to press the issue and the GOM needed to be prepared and consider how best to manage this. Bourita urged the USG to inform the GOM early in the process if its position changes and to "explain to us how it is in U.S. interests."

110. (U) DAS Sanderson has cleared this cable.

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